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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 000074

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [NL](#) [CU](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/CUBA/EU: EU LIKELY TO CHANGE POLICY
HOPING TO FORCE CUBA'S HAND

REF: A. THE HAGUE 48

[1](#)B. STATE 4900

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew Schofer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Following up reftels demarche, Poloff met January 13 with Jan Jap Groenemeyer (MFA, Cuba Desk), who confirmed the January 31 GAERC would likely approve relaxing the EU's June 2003 measures to encourage more positive movement from the Cubans; the EU Presidency is drafting "conclusions" for that meeting now. Noting the Cubans are "stubborn and proud," he was surprised they had already "defroze" relations with the all EU missions in Havana despite the fact that the June 2003 measures were still technically in place. Spain continued to lead on the issue; impetus for a change in EU policy had come from the GOS, which wanted to reverse the Aznar June 2003 measures and in doing so had attracted adherents to the argument that the current EU strategy was not working, he said. (They have not attracted the USG, Poloff countered.) For the time being, consensus remains an important EU goal vis-a-vis Cuba. Groenemeyer added that when the EU changes the policy as expected, we should look for high level visits to Havana, at the Commissioner/Minister/Director General level, at which time the EU would raise human rights concerns in detail. The first test for a new EU position related to national days would be the March 25 commemoration of Greek national day.

[1](#)2. (C) Groenemeyer expected that the GAERC would call on the Cuban government to release the rest of the 75 jailed dissidents. "The Cubans know they have to do something," he said. From experience, however, he expected them to respond with half-measures, releasing some but not all, thereby presenting the EU with a dilemma when they revisit the situation in June. At that time, he could anticipate that harder line EU members (like the Dutch) would want to say "I told you so" and demand a return to a tougher EU stance. One such response, Groenemeyer revealed, could be the publishing of an EU "black list" of Cuban officials prohibited from traveling to the EU, an idea he said the Dutch presented earlier this year but that had been set aside as "before its time."

[1](#)3. (C) The dissidents should anticipate "greater access to the EU" out of the a revised EU policy. Havana based Heads of Mission (HOMs), chaired by the Dutch representing the EU Presidency, would meet soon to devise strategies for deepening dialogue, Groenemeyer said. When pressed for reaction to the USG's ref B points, he would not comment specifically on all of them but promised to fax them directly to the Dutch rep in Havana for placement on the agenda of discussions there. He thought it unlikely, however, that the EU would agree to invite USINT reps to the monthly meetings of the EU's human rights working group in Havana. It could give the Cubans an excuse to continue arguing that "the EU is just in the pocket of the USG." Poloff disagreed, saying that appearances of a common USG/EU stance against Castro could have obvious benefits. Groenemeyer suggested that a "good cop" EU twinned with a "bad cop" USG might be more effective.

[1](#)4. (C) Turning to broader issues, Groenemeyer said the EU continued to look beyond immediate sanctions. He observed that the stricter USG controls (e.g., limits on remittances) seemed to be having a negative impact on the Cuban economy but not on Castro, "who does not give a damn about Cuba, sits in his palace, and dreams about trips to North Korea." With this in mind, the EU has in addition to the "June measures" its Common Position on Cuba, and Groenemeyer hoped the USG would keep the two EU tracks separate. The June measures were short term, a reaction to a GOC outrage designed to show support for the dissidents. Longer term, the "Common Policy" aims to lay the groundwork for an eventual peaceful transition post-Castro and strives to improve the economic well-being of Cubans now. The EU will review its Common Policy, also in June but separately from the review of the short term measures. EU HOM's in Havana will report on the conditions in the country, and these reports will form the basis for the EU's review of the Common Policy, he said.

SOBEL